

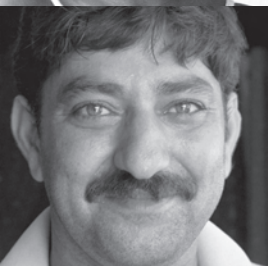
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FINAL REPORT

December 1998–June 2004

USAID'S IMPLEMENTING AIDS PREVENTION AND CARE (IMPACT) PROJECT



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Final Report
for the
Implementing AIDS Prevention
and Care (IMPACT) Project in

The Dominican Republic

December 1998 to June 2004

Dominican Republic Final Report

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By Family Health International

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In partnership with

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BSS	Behavioral Surveillance Survey
CENISMI	Centro Nacional de Investigaciones en Salud Materno-Infantil
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DIGECITSS	Dirección General de Control de Infecciones de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA
IEC	Information, education and communication
IMPACT	Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care Project
INTEC	National Technical and Science University
ISH	Instituto de Sexualidad Humana
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PLHA	People living with HIV/AIDS
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission
PROCETS	Programa de Control de Enfermadades de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VCT	Voluntary counseling and testing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care (IMPACT) Project provided critically important assistance to the Dominican Republic's National STI and HIV/AIDS Program and the Ministry of Health to develop services for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) from 1998 to 2004. In its first year, IMPACT provided technical and financial support to develop the National STI/HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan and work plans for 19 provinces. IMPACT also helped develop the country's National STI and HIV Counseling Norms and supported training in STI syndromic management. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded IMPACT's program in the Dominican Republic.

Under IMPACT, the country's first pilot sites for services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission opened at Ricardo Limardo Hospital in Puerto Plata and at Las Minas Hospital, Altagracia Maternity Hospital and the Military Hospital in Santo Domingo. Because the Santo Domingo hospitals together serve more than half the country's pregnant women, these sites alone have significantly lowered vertical transmission within the Dominican Republic.

IMPACT also helped launch HIV voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) services in the Dominican Republic, adding pre- and post-test counseling services to existing HIV testing services, which served more than 100,000 clients nationwide between April 2003 and August 2004. By the time the project ended, more than 100 health facilities were offering VCT, providing a gateway to comprehensive HIV and AIDS services for the Dominican population.

PROGRAM STRATEGIES, IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

Introduction

The Implementing AIDS Prevention and Control (IMPACT) Project's activities in the Dominican Republic took place from December 1998 to June 2004. With funding from USAID, IMPACT supported the efforts of the Ministry of Health's National STI and HIV/AIDS Program (in Spanish, Dirección General de Control de Infecciones de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA, or DIGECITSS) to develop STI and HIV/AIDS prevention and care services. Partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Population Services International and with other donor agencies such as UNICEF strengthened both the Ministry of Health and STI and HIV/AIDS services.

Country Context

According to the 2002 National Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the Dominican Republic has a generalized HIV epidemic. HIV seroprevalence among adults is 1 percent (approximately 46,500 individuals). The highest HIV prevalence is in the Eastern, Northern and Border regions, which have ports, free trade zones, tourism and migratory populations, including communities of Dominican and Haitian sugar cane workers with HIV prevalence as high as 5 percent.

The Dominican government responded with a comprehensive strategy based on multisectoral collaboration. For example, the Ministry of Health developed joint programs with the ministries of youth, education and tourism. Community, public health and workplace prevention interventions collaborated to combat stigma and discrimination and to improve the quality and availability of HIV/AIDS information and services.

Program Strategies and Activities

IMPACT's primary objective in the Dominican Republic was to provide technical assistance and support to DIGECITSS. During its initial stage, IMPACT focused on providing institutional capacity building to the Ministry of Health through strategic and operational planning, Behavioral Surveillance Survey (BSS) studies and program strategy development.

Next, IMPACT helped implement the country's first four sites for preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) and promoted discussion about the need for VCT services within the National Health System. IMPACT also helped create national norms for STI and HIV services, including the National STI and HIV Counseling Norms, and supported training in syndromic management of STIs for health care providers.

Implementing the 2002 National Demographic Health Study, which required HIV testing services and pre- and post-test counseling in some provinces, provided an opportunity to introduce VCT services throughout the Dominican Republic. IMPACT trained newly hired counselors in pre- and post-testing counseling, provided systematic supervision and produced educational materials. With IMPACT's support, the network of VCT services expanded to 110 sites.

The primary activities and accomplishments in key strategic areas include the following.

General institutional strengthening and technical assistance to DIGECITSS:

- Renovated offices.
- Provided technical assistance to develop DIGECITSS' organizational structure.
- Developed the National STI/HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan.
- Developed the provincial STI and HIV/AIDS work plans.
- Provided technical assistance in implementing BSS studies.
- Developed the National PMTCT Program.
- Developed the VCT National Strategy.
- Developed recommendations for strengthening STI components within DIGECITSS.

Support to DIGECITSS' HIV program activities:

- Provided technical assistance in establishing the National STI and HIV Counseling Norms.
- Established four pilot PMTCT sites.
- Established 110 VCT sites.
- Trained 360 counselors in HIV pre- and post-test counseling.
- Produced radio spots, signs and posters to promote VCT services.
- Published 75,000 STI and AIDS information pamphlets.
- Printed PMTCT manuals and educational information.

Support to DIGECITSS' STI program activities:

- Provided technical assistance in determining and disseminating STI norms.
- Developed and printed STI materials for service providers and the community.
- Trained health care providers in STI syndromic management.

Implementation and Management

During IMPACT's initial period, FHI/Arlington helped DIGECITSS through consultancies and technical assistance. Later, IMPACT hired a local manager to work directly with the Ministry of Health.

IMPACT supported collaborative efforts among three NGOs and the Ministry of Health that were very effective in developing and sustaining STI and HIV/AIDS interventions.

- The Centro Nacional de Investigaciones en Salud Materno-Infantil (CENISMI), a local NGO with research experience, received a grant to set up the country's first PMTCT sites at two maternity hospitals. CENISMI has since given significant support to the Ministry of Health to strengthen PMTCT services throughout the country.
- Fundación Genesis, a local NGO involved in AIDS activities, supported data collection and monitoring to achieve rapid start-up of VCT sites.
- In IMPACT's final year, the Instituto de Sexualidad Humana (ISH) implemented an innovative community mobilization pilot project in two Santo Domingo communities to increase demand for VCT services and foster greater community participation in providing community-based services for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHA).

IMPACT also hired universities and private firms to facilitate technical and planning workshops. The National Technology and Sciences University (INTEC) teamed up with the Instituto Dermatológico to implement both the theoretical and clinical components of the STI syndromic

management training. In 1999, ALEPH, a consulting firm specializing in strategic planning and management, helped develop the national STI and HIV/AIDS strategic planning process, as well as provincial work plans.

Dominican Republic Program Timeline

HIV/AIDS Activities														
Program Deliverables	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.
Develop National STI/HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan														
Develop STI/HIV/AIDS provincial work plans														
Consult on development of National HIV/AIDS Treatment Norms														
Consult on implementing national Behavioral Surveillance Surveys														
Consult on developing a national strategy to introduce VCT services in Dominican health system														
Renovate DIGECITSS offices														
Set-up and provide technical assistance to three initial PMTCT pilot sites														
Support development of National STI and HIV Counseling Norms														
Support HIV seroprevalence study (setting up HIV testing and counseling services in 30 centers)														
Expand VCT service network to 110 sites throughout the country														
Develop materials to identify and promote VCT services														
Assess national network of VCT services														
Link VCT sites to community networks (pilot project)														

STI Activities														
Program Deliverables	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.	Jan.- June	July- Dec.
Train health service providers in STI syndromic management														
Provide technical assistance to develop and distribute pre-packaged therapy														
Provide technical assistance to develop STI norms														
Develop STI materials for patient education and health care provider training														
Disseminate National STI Norms in Regions I, V, VII, VIII														
Provide STI program assessment, program restructuring and strategic planning														
Provide technical assistance to develop National STI Norms														

Program Results

Program outputs included the following:

- IMPACT helped develop the National STI Norms.
- In collaboration with UNICEF and other consultants, IMPACT provided technical assistance to develop the National STI and HIV Counseling Norms.
- IMPACT participated in a technical working group responsible for developing the draft of the National HIV/AIDS Treatment Norms.
- IMPACT produced the *STI Management Manual*.
- In collaboration with Population Services International, IMPACT produced STI syndromic management patient education materials.
- IMPACT produced and printed VCT educational and promotional materials.
- IMPACT supported the training of 360 health service providers in pre- and post-test counseling.

Service outputs included the following:

- IMPACT's support to counseling and testing services helped more than 110,000 persons receive counseling and testing services (April 2003 to August 2004).
- IMPACT's implementing partners formed four support groups for PLHA and their families.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Decision makers and program managers should take advantage of special opportunities to develop HIV services.

Despite numerous discussions with the Ministry of Health about the importance of setting up VCT services, little happened until the 2002 DHS required adherence to bioethical standards ensuring counseling and HIV testing for survey participants. This provided an opportunity to quickly create initial VCT sites, which later expanded into a national VCT network.

In NGO program implementation, building local capacity and fostering participatory processes help to promote sustainability.

During the national and provincial STI and HIV/AIDS planning process, the importance of a decentralized, participatory approach became clear. Developing provincial plans with trained leaders from NGOs and the Ministry of Health resulted in ownership of the process at both the national and provincial levels. In contrast, as VCT services expanded quickly because of DHS requirements, it became difficult to support such a large network, and the Dominican health system felt little ownership of the services. Signed agreements or memorandums of understanding with the Ministry of Health and participating health facilities would have fostered collaboration.

Program managers should promote collaboration between the Ministry of Health and NGOs.

In the past, the Ministry of Health perceived NGOs as competitors and resisted collaboration. But the Ministry of Health's two NGO partnerships setting up VCT and PMTCT services helped show the potential for partnership and the value of using NGOs to strengthen Ministry programs. To ensure the effectiveness of these partnerships, roles should be clearly defined. NGOs should learn how to work effectively with the Ministry of Health by using official collaborative agreements.

NGOs and other implementing organizations should tap community skills and commitment.

IMPACT's experiences in the Dominican Republic revealed that building the skills of community-based organizations and leaders is a worthwhile investment. During a pilot community mobilization project aimed to increase demand for VCT services, newly formed community committees helped promote services and follow-up. They conducted educational activities, using creative yet low-cost promotional methods. Eventually these committees took on a life of their own and continued their work long after the project ended.

HIGHLIGHTS OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNER ACTIVITIES

Name	Organizational Type	Target Population	Budget (US\$)	Intervention	Project Dates
Instituto de Sexualidad Humana (ISH)	NGO	Health service providers and community health promoters	38,000	Created community pilot project linking VCT sites with community interventions	3/15/04-6/30/04
Fundación Genesis	NGO	Health service providers	420,179	Renovated space for VCT services, trained health care providers, conducted monitoring and evaluation of services	6/25/02-11/30/03
CENISMI	NGO	HIV+ pregnant women	24,506	Set up initial PMTCT sites in target hospitals	6/1/01-1/31/02
INTEC	University	Health service providers	30,071	Trained health service providers in STI syndromic management	7/1/00-8/31/01
Patronato de Solidaridad	NGO	Health providers, NGOs, community representatives, private sector	34,500	Gave technical assistance and financial management in developing 6 provincial work plans	1/15/01-6/30/01
ALEPH	Private corporation	MOH provincial and central technicians	67,304	Gave technical assistance in provincial planning	9/13/99-5/31/00
ALEPH	Private corporation	MOH provincial and central technicians	36,670	Standardized methodology for provincial planning	5/28/99-12/31/99
ALEPH	Private corporation	MOH provincial and central technicians	55,827	Supported provincial operational planning	7/6/00-9/30/99
Fundación Genesis	NGO	Health care providers, community educators, NGOs, technicians	9,506	Organized STI workshops	5/3/99-7/31/99
Social Impact	Private corporation	Health care providers and local MOH technicians	9,235	Facilitated STI workshops and training of local facilitators in the Appreciative Inquiry Methodology	5/1/99-6/30/99
Social Impact	Private corporation	Representatives from international agencies and MOH	179,867	Developed National STI and HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan	2/1/99-6/15/99

ATTACHMENT A: Country Program Financial Summary

Since 1999, USAID/Dominican Republic has committed \$1,882,000 to IMPACT/ Dominican Republic, of which \$432,000 was allocated for FY04. IMPACT/DR program closed on June 30, 2004. A total of \$1,856,365 was spent, with \$25,635 remaining at the project's end.

Key program indicators focused on the technical areas of VCT, IEC/BCC and human capacity building. USAID's mandatory Program Indicators reported were:

IEC/behavior change communication:

- Number of materials developed
- Number of materials disseminated

VCT:

- Number of counselors trained
- Number of clients seen at VCT centers
- Number of new VCT sites established
- Number of VCT centers

Human capacity building:

- Number of training sessions conducted
- Number of people trained

IMPACT provided the following subagreements over the life of the project (LOP):

FCO	IA	Total LOP budget
85677	Fundación Genesis	\$420,179
85067	Institute of Human Sexuality	\$33,090
85676	CENISMI	\$24,506
85065	INTEC	\$30,071
85675	Patronato de Solidaridad	\$34,500
85020	ALEPH: Follow-up to provincial planning	\$67,304
85070	ALEPH: Standardize operational planning methodology	\$36,670
85030	ALEPH: Provincial operational planning	\$55,827
85630	Fundación Genesis: STI w/ logistics	\$9,506
85040	Social Impact AA#2	\$9,235
85439	Social Impact AA#1	\$170,867
85060	Institute for Tropical Medicine Special Work Order	\$1,419

ATTACHMENT B: Technical Assistance Roster

Date	Purpose	Person-weeks
July 1998	Designed and developed draft scope of work for IMPACT technical assistance to PROCETS (Programa de Control de Enfermadades de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA).*	2.5
March 1999	Observed and supported the participatory strategic planning process and second stakeholders' workshop, working closely with the facilitators and technical team members fielded by Social Impact to develop a National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan for the Dominican Republic; planned next steps with USAID and PROCETS* and discussed IMPACT activities and USAID plans for balance of fiscal year.	1
November 1999	Conducted two one-day workshops addressing developmental aspects of the HIV epidemic in the Dominican Republic to widen the public health perspective of participants.	1
February 2000	Conducted monitoring visit to country program with the IMPACT coordinator, prepared activity report and revised FY2000 workplan and budget to respond to current priorities of DIGECITSS, IMPACT and USAID.	1
October 2000	Monitored ongoing country program activities and met with new DIGECITSS director to review and finalize semi-annual report with IMPACT coordinator. Helped build in-country IMPACT capacity in program management and reporting.	2
May 2004	Reviewed the MOH's strategies for STI control. Wrote up a proposed programmatic structure for the STI program.	1

* PROCETS (Programa de Control de Enfermadades de Transmisión Sexual y SIDA) was the earlier name of the Dominican Republic's national AIDS control program; it was later replaced by DIGECITSS.



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